

Compelled to Avenge

by emcc

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Summary: This is a serious (and expanded) adaptation of the second part of Squirrelking's "Half-Life: Full Life Consequences" quadrilogy ("What Has Tobe [sic] Done"). It is not related to the story that was published by someone else a few hours after the publication of this one, except that they are based on the same set of stories.

Compelled to Avenge

Author's note: After reading a serious adaptation of Half-Life: Full Life Consequences, I figured that I could do something similar myself, but I thought it would be more interesting to make one of its sequel - WhatHasTobeDone. This story is loosely based on WhatHasTobeDone by squirrelking, so all credits go to him. In case you wonder why one of the characters speaks in a way that is as formal as the narrative, I did it that way to make it easier to keep the characters apart from each other. Additionally, in a matter of difference from the original story, this one doesn't take place in the vicinity of Ravenholm.

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><p>As the strider withdrew its spear-like foot from the remains of Gordon, John Freeman realized what had just happened - his brother had been killed in front of him, less than ten minutes after they had met for the first time in more than twenty years. He could not believe how both of them could have failed to notice the large monstrosity approaching them before it was too late. It took a few seconds for him to gather his thoughts and realize that he was still standing less than twenty metres away from it. John turned around and sprinted towards his motorcycle, just as the strider fired at the spot where he had been standing moments ago.<p>

Working on nothing but survival instinct and muscle memory, John got the bike started and drove off among the forest-covered hills with

the strider following him. _How can something so big move so fast?_ John thought upon glancing back at the cybernetic creature that appeared to have no trouble at all keeping up with his pace. John geared up in a desperate attempt to get away, but the strider started shooting again. Moving with such a high speed, the strider suffered a severe decrease in accuracy, causing the bullets to spray in every imaginable direction. One of the bullets hit the rear wheel of the motorcycle. The tire exploded and John lost control. Struggling to keep his balance for as long as possible, he accidentally steered his bike off the road. The last thing John saw before passing out was the large tree that he collided with.

When John woke up, all he could see was an irregular pattern of leaves and light. His whole body was aching. He could move, but doing so was incredibly painful. He was hidden from the strider's view by the branches of the tree, which was now lying on the ground. John concluded that it must have fallen over when he crashed into it. This was the first chance he got to finally take in the events of the last few hours. Earlier the same day, he had received a distress call from his brother Gordon, who claimed that he was under siege and needed help. It was with great disbelief that John had set out to get to the coordinates specified in the message, considering the fact that his brother had disappeared at the same time as the event known as "the Black Mesa incident". During the Seven-Hour War and the years that followed it, there had not been a single word from him. Among the resistance movement, rumors had sprung up, making Gordon seem like a form of Messiah, known as "The One Free Man". And now, roughly twenty years later, Gordon had mysteriously reappeared, only a few weeks after the still unexplained destruction of the Citadel, and was in need for his brother's help. Because of his skepticism, John had been very surprised to find that the caller had actually been Gordon. In all those years he had not aged a bit, still looking like he was 27 years old, like the day he disappeared. Only moments after the two of them had met, Gordon had been brutally killed right before John's eyes.

Upon reaching this point in his recollection, John curled up in a fetal position and began to cry. During the time when Gordon was missing, there had still been a chance that he was alive. Now, however, he was gone for certain, and there was nothing John could do to bring him back.

His train of thought was interrupted when the strider slammed one of its legs down through the foliage, hitting the ground mere inches from John's head. John rolled sideways, in order to avoid a second strike that, once again, hit the ground only a few inches away. John was terrified; if he stayed he would eventually get impaled, and if he ran away he would get shot. Confronted with his mortality, he thought about his children - Henry and Alice. Their mother had died during the Seven-Hour War, and even though they were both grown up by now, John knew that they did not want to lose their father as well.

"John Freeman, over here!" a voice called out. John looked around, but could not see anyone. As he dodged the strider's foot a third time, he spotted an open door in one of the nearby hills. An underground bunker! Without giving it a second thought, John crawled out from the branches, hoping that he would be able to reach the door before the strider spotted him. He got there without problems, and shut it as soon as he got through.

It was pitch black inside the bunker. The only audible sound was a strangely familiar soft humming that continuously shifted its pitch slightly up and down. The near-silence was broken by a voice, speaking in the darkness, the sound of it reverberating between the walls of concrete and metal. "Are you ok?" It was the same speaker that had called out for John earlier, but it was not until now that John noticed that the voice sounded androgynous and computer-generated.

"I'm fine," John said, "or at least I think so," he added after a short pause. "I dunno who you are, but thanks for saving me."

"Before I show you who I am, I ask of you not to be frightened. Despite my appearance, I am on your side." The anonymous speaker moved closer to John. He could feel it, because the air suddenly became cooler. "Can I trust you with that?"

"Yes," John responded. A flashlight was turned on in front of him, completely dazzling him. Instinctively, John lifted his hand up to cover his eyes. "Ok, that's not really helping. Could you angle it at yourself?"

"I apologize. I am unfortunately anatomically incapable of pointing it at myself, but there is a mirror on that table over there." The speaker pointed the flashlight towards a nearby table. Just like John was told, there was a mirror there, which he picked up. The speaker pointed the light towards the mirror, and John angled the mirror so the light was reflected back.

The sight he was presented with surprised him, but explained both the humming and the strangeness of the speaker's voice. In front of him hovered a Combine scanner, one of the flying cameras that the Combine used for surveillance and reconnaissance. "Not quite what you expected, I suppose," the scanner said. "I was reprogrammed by the resistance. The original software of this... device... was replaced with me - an artificial intelligence. They also added a loudspeaker to its hardware. I was given the task of watching over you."

Great, John thought, _so the only help they send is a machine that's completely useless in combat._ "So how do we get out of here with that strider still outside?" he said.

"I will get to that," the scanner replied. "First, however, I would like to relay a message I received a few minutes ago."

"Fire away."

"It is from your mother." The scanner produced a computer-generated sound that seemed to John like a vague attempt at mimicking the sound of a human clearing its throat. When it spoke again, it was with the voice of John's mother. "_John. I must be brief, since I don't know how long it'll take for the Combine to break the encryption of this message. A girl here told me that you've been contacted by Gordon! Please, if what I've heard is true, please let me meet him. All these years, I've thought he was dead, or worse, possessed by one of those... creatures! My current location is at 51.4056 degrees north and 30.0569 degrees east. Please, I miss you both._"

As the message ended, the wave of emotions washed over John once more. He sank down onto the floor, covered his face with his hands and started crying again. If he managed to get out alive, how would he tell his mother about Gordon's death? How would she react? Would she blame him? The scanner lowered itself down to the height of John's face. Without thinking, he grabbed it and embraced it. It was a heat-of-the-moment act, something he did without thinking, but he felt that physically feeling the presence of another sentient being would provide at least a little comfort, and maybe cheer him up a bit, so he held the cold metal device pressed against his cheek. The scanner made no attempt to fly away; it was capable of feeling empathy, and even though it found it strange that humans tended to express their emotions physically instead of verbally, it knew that so was the case.

For several minutes John sat there with the scanner, but as he eventually stood up, he whispered two words to it: "Thank you." Then, he made an attempt at hiding his emotions as well as he could. "So, how do we..." John interrupted himself. He intended to end the sentence with "kill the strider," but knew that saying the word "kill" would cause him to think of Gordon again. "How do we destroy the strider?"

"There must be some form of munitions storage here," the scanner replied. It turned away from John and used its flash once. For a moment, the room they were in was bathed in white light. In the short time the room was illuminated, John could not make out any close details, but it was enough for him to see that the bunker consisted of only the small room they were in. On one of the four walls there were four shelves. There was something on the shelves, possibly weapons, but the light ceased before he got a chance to make a close inspection. In the corner of the room that was furthest away from John, there was also something else. John only saw its silhouette in the corner of his eye, but he did not need more than that to instantly see what it was. The being that lay on the floor had the unmistakable shape of a headcrab zombie, one of the unfortunate souls who had fallen victim to a fate worse than death.

"Did you see that?" John asked.

"Yes," the scanner replied.

"You think it's alive?"

"I do not know. At least, it has not shown any sign of noticing our presence so far."

"What's the stuff on the shelves?"

"I saved the picture. From what I can tell, there are weapons on them. A rocket launcher, a machine gun, and a form of weapon that I do not recognize. However, it has a label on it, saying 'Tau Cannon'. The fourth shelf is full of ammunition."

A sound was heard from the corner where the zombie was. The scanner turned and pointed its built-in flashlight towards it. The zombie was slowly standing up - their talking had woken it up! While the scanner kept its light fixed on the zombie, John felt his way through the darkness until he found the shelves he had seen before. John reached

them the moment that the zombie reached him. He grabbed the first object his hand made contact with, he was not sure what it was, and used all of his strength to slam it down on the headcrab that clung to the head of its host. John was sprayed with blood, both human and alien. The monster died with a loud scream and fell to the ground where the blood kept pouring out of the newly made hole in its head. John felt sorry for the man. He kept telling himself that getting taken over by a headcrab caused the host's mind to die, but somehow he had a feeling that that was not the case, that the poor man had been alive and conscious the whole time, knowing what was happening, just like Gordon had been when the strider killed him... _No!_ John thought, knowing that he again was on the verge of tears. _I have to stop thinking about Gordon._ To keep himself from crying, he tried to channel his emotions in a different direction, turning his sorrow into anger. "I will kill the strider," he said, this time without having any trouble saying the word "kill". "And then, if there is such a thing as an afterlife, I know that wherever Gordon's soul now resides, he will be happy."

The scanner thought about saying "That was deep," but decided not to, figuring that it would ruin the mood. Instead, it turned its flashlight towards the object in John's right hand. It was an orange rocket, ammunition for the rocket launcher lying on one of the shelves. The rocket was covered in blood, both red and yellow, both colours matching its orange surface. John looked at the rocket, and then he turned his head to look at the rocket launcher, faintly visible in the penumbra of the glow from the scanner's light. An idea formed within his mind...

John stepped out of the bunker, holding the heavy rocket launcher. It was fully loaded, carrying three rockets. The strider was still standing by the tree, repeatedly stomping its foot down through the leaves. Apparently, it must have failed to at all notice John running away. To some extent, John found it amusing to see it balance on two of its legs when preparing to lower its foot once more. John moved slowly forward until he was sure he had a good angle. Then, when the strider was once again balancing between two strikes, John pulled the trigger. The recoil of the launcher was stronger than John had expected, and almost knocked him over, but the missile hit its target which exploded, sending pieces of it flying in every direction. A large splash of the creature's internal body fluids hit John, and he prayed for all it was worth that he would never find out what kind of fluid it was.

Dirty, but alive, John waited as the scanner flew out of the bunker. "We did it. The goddamn bastard is blown to bits," John said, not noticing the Combine troop carrier approaching in the distance...

To be continued?

* * *

><p>Another note by the author: The coordinates that John's mother mentions are actually the coordinates for Pripyat, a city near Chernobyl. I figured it would fit, since it's implied that Half-Life 2 takes place somewhere in eastern Europe. Like I mentioned in my first note, the decision to let the scanner speak with a very formal language was done intentionally, partly to emphasize the fact that it's an AI, and partially to make it easier to tell which character is saying what.

End
file.